

EPI Update for Friday, November 21, 2014
Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology (CADE)
Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH)

Items for this week's EPI Update include:

- **Thanksgiving food safety tips**
- **Weather's effect on illness**
- **Cold weather brings carbon monoxide risks**
- **Ebola update**
- **Meeting announcements and training opportunities**

Thanksgiving food safety tips

Thawing turkeys must be kept at a safe temperature. The "danger zone" is between 40 and 140°F, the temperature range where foodborne bacteria multiply rapidly. While frozen, a turkey is safe indefinitely, but as soon as it begins to thaw, bacteria that may have been present before freezing can begin to grow again in the temperature "danger zone." There are three safe ways to thaw a frozen turkey.

Refrigerator:

- Plan ahead; allow approximately 24 hours for each 4 to 5 pounds in a refrigerator set at 40°F or below.
- Place the turkey in a container to prevent the juices from dripping on other foods.
- A thawed turkey can remain in the refrigerator for one or two days before cooking.

Cold water thawing:

- Allow about 30 minutes per pound.
- Be sure the turkey is in a leak-proof plastic bag to prevent cross-contamination and to prevent the turkey from absorbing water, resulting in a watery product.
- Submerge the wrapped turkey in cold tap water. Change the water every 30 minutes until the turkey is thawed. Cook the turkey immediately after it is thawed.

Microwave:

- Follow the microwave oven manufacturer's instructions when defrosting a turkey. Plan to cook it immediately after thawing because some areas of the food may become warm and begin to cook during microwaving.

The storage of turkey and other meal leftovers is just as important as the preparation. Here are some basic guidelines:

- It is important to take out all of the stuffing from the turkey soon after you remove the bird from the oven. Extra stuffing can be kept hot in the oven at 200°F while you eat, or should be refrigerated within two hours of cooking. Cut the turkey meat off the bones.
- From the time you take the turkey out of the oven, you have two hours to serve it, eat it, and then refrigerate or freeze the leftovers - the turkey, stuffing and gravy. Why just two hours? Because bacteria that cause food poisoning can multiply to dangerous levels on perishable food left longer than two hours at room temperature.
- Store leftovers properly to prevent bacterial growth. Large quantities should be divided into smaller portions and stored in several small or shallow covered containers. That's because food in small amounts will get cold more quickly. The temperature of the refrigerator should be 40°F or slightly below.
- Use refrigerated cooked turkey within three to four days.
- Use stuffing and gravy within one to two days.
- Eat leftover casseroles and cooked vegetables within three to four days.

- Reheat leftovers to 165°F. Bring leftover gravy to a rolling boil on the stove before serving it a second time.
- Finish fruit and cream pies within two to three days and cheesecake within seven days.

Regardless of how many days have passed, if in doubt, throw it out! For more information on foodborne illnesses and their symptoms, visit www.idph.state.ia.us/Cade/Foodborne.aspx. For information on safe Thanksgiving meal preparation, visit www.cdc.gov/features/TurkeyTime/.

Weather's effect on illness

As we begin the winter season, not only do temperatures decrease, so does humidity. The loss of moisture in the air causes the mucosal membranes to dry out. This may be one of the reasons that respiratory viruses and other diseases such as meningococcal meningitis cause more illness at this time of year. Vaccines are the best way to prevent many of these infections. Ensure everyone is up-to-date on not only the seasonal flu vaccine but pneumococcal, meningococcal, Hib, and any other bacterial vaccines. Meningococcal vaccine is especially important for certain populations such as students living in dormitories and laboratorians who work with this organism.

Cold weather brings carbon monoxide risks

The home heating season has begun and as furnaces are turned on, the risk for carbon monoxide (CO) exposure increases. This odorless, tasteless and colorless gas can be emitted from poorly functioning or unvented furnaces or other gas-powered home appliances.

Carbon monoxide is the leading cause of accidental poisoning deaths in the United States, with nearly half of all accidental carbon monoxide deaths occurring during the winter. Unintentional CO exposure also accounts for an estimated 15,000 emergency department visits in the United States each year. The most common symptoms of CO poisoning are headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea, vomiting, chest pain, and altered mental status. Symptoms of severe CO poisoning include malaise, shortness of breath, headache, nausea, chest pain, irritability, lack of coordination, altered mental status, other neurologic symptoms, loss of consciousness, coma, and death. Signs include elevated heart rate, rapid breathing, low blood pressure, various neurologic findings including impaired memory, cognitive and sensory disturbances.

Carbon monoxide poisoning is reportable to IDPH if there is a blood-carbon monoxide level equal to or greater than 10 percent carboxyhemoglobin or its equivalent in a breath analyzer test, or a clinical diagnosis regardless of any test results. CO poisoning can be reported via the Iowa Disease Surveillance System (IDSS) or by fax to 515-281-4529.

The Iowa Statewide Poison Control Center (1-800-222-1222) offers 24/7 consultation to the public and physicians on CO treatment and forwards reports of CO exposures and poisonings to IDPH. For more information, visit www.idph.state.ia.us/eh/carbon_monoxide.asp.

Ebola update

There are no cases of Ebola in Iowa. No persons in Iowa are being tested for Ebola. This week there are five travelers who are considered to be at "low risk" of Ebola who are under a public health order to self-monitor for symptoms twice daily, and one traveler at "some risk" of Ebola who is under a public health order to stay at home (with non-congregate outdoor activities allowed) and is being monitored twice daily for symptoms. For more information, visit www.idph.state.ia.us/IDPHChannelsService/file.ashx?file=14FFEEBD-F21B-45A8-8E09-780C8528F065.

IDPH Ebola web page can be found at

www.idph.state.ia.us/EHI/Issue.aspx?issue=Ebola%20Outbreak&pg=Ebola%20Outbreak%20Home.

New this week from IDPH

1. Ambulatory Care Fact Sheet
www.idph.state.ia.us/IDPHChannelsService/file.ashx?file=78B67E8F-3444-44B6-8EB1-101AD3C7A9FF
2. Ebola Information for West Africans living in the United States
www.idph.state.ia.us/IDPHChannelsService/file.ashx?file=6C6DFFC6-FC39-4340-AD61-249916EE311A

New this week from CDC

1. Level 3 Travel notice: Sierra Leone
wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/warning/ebola-sierra-leone
2. Level 3 Travel notice: Liberia
wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/warning/ebola-liberia
3. Level 3 Travel notice: Guinea
wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/warning/ebola-guinea
4. Level 2 Travel notice: Mali
wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/alert/ebola-mali
5. Enhanced Airport Entry Screening to Begin for Travelers to the United States from Mali
www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2014/p1116-travelers-from-mali.html
6. 2014 Ebola Outbreak in West Africa - Cumulative Reported Cases Graphs
www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/outbreaks/2014-west-africa/cumulative-cases-graphs.html
7. Top 10 Things You Really Need to Know about Ebola
www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/pdf/top-10-things.pdf
8. Best Practices for Procuring Personal Protective Equipment for Ebola Response
www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/procuring-ppe.html
9. Updated Case Counts
www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/outbreaks/2014-west-africa/case-counts.html
10. Communicating with West African Communities - New Lists of Available Materials
www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/outbreaks/2014-west-africa/communication-resources/index.html

Meeting announcements and training opportunities

None

There will be no Epi Update next week because of the Thanksgiving holiday; the next edition will be published on December 5th.

Have a healthy and happy (and warmer) week! Happy Thanksgiving everyone!

Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology

Iowa Department of Public Health

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